

cultural volunteer ©

issue 4 – APRIL 2003

WELCOME!

cultural volunteer (cv) is a free e-news and information service for arts management professionals. **cv** is published six times a year and comes to you from Lynn Blackadder, of Arts People and Projects arts management consultancy www.lynnblackadder.com, specialising in helping organisations successfully involve volunteers. You can choose to read **cv** in email or as a Word attachment. I hope you enjoy **cv**, but if you don't wish to receive future issues, please return this email typing 'unsubscribe' in the subject line.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

This month **cv** is a special recruitment issue. Leading volunteering trainer **Rob Jackson** tells us **how to get ahead in volunteer recruitment**, and we provide an **overview of organisations that can help you find volunteers**, with some simple **tips and techniques for interviewing**.

WHY YOU SHOULD READ **cv** ...

cv is for arts management professionals who currently involve volunteers in their organisations, and for those who don't, but would like to find out more about volunteers.

cv aims to raise awareness of the resource cultural volunteers represent, and how to utilise it effectively.

cv actively campaigns for the recognition and progression of volunteers working in arts organisations.

cv can help you to better understand the nature of volunteering and how it relates to your organisation.

cv will regularly bring to your attention useful information, resources and commentary on volunteering in the cultural sector. Experts on volunteer management will feature, and we will explore topics raised by you in future issues.

FEATURE: Rob Jackson, of the volunteer training company R Jackson Associates, gives his thoughts on 'Marketing, McDonald's and Volunteer Recruitment'

How to get the message across

Planning your message before you recruit is crucial to your success. As volunteering guru Susan Ellis says, "It is hard to sound sincere when recruiting volunteers in desperation!"

Think about constructing your recruitment message from the prospective volunteers' point of view. Instead of focusing just on what *you* need, focus on what they need too. This approach is basic consumer marketing. For example, typical advantages for potential volunteers might be: the chance to use your skills for an interesting, worthwhile cause; access to a stimulating work environment; the

opportunity for training or learning on the job; getting involved in the local community; or meeting people with similar interests.

Packaging up the offer

Successful volunteer recruitment messages should be built around four basic marketing principles, regardless of the recruitment style in which they are used:

- Awareness – What is the need your organisation is addressing?
- Interest – How are you addressing the need?
- Desire – What makes volunteering with you attractive?
- Action – What should your audience do next?

Getting the timing right

The final aspect to consider in planning your recruitment message is when to put it out in the public domain. This will really depend on your organisational needs, but January and September always seem to be good volunteer recruitment times. January is full of New Year resolutions and post-Christmas guilt at over indulgence. September is that other 'new year', the start of an academic year, with student and parents alike exposed to new experiences and freedoms.

But is once or twice a year enough? Returning to Susan Ellis, she talks about the McDonald's quotient, a helpful reminder about the importance of ongoing recruitment efforts:

“Most people today know about McDonald’s. They serve more meals per day worldwide than any other body other than the US Army. Yet in recent years I cannot remember a single day in which I have not heard or seen at least one commercial for McDonald’s.”

“Now if McDonald’s feels I have to be reminded day after day, advert by advert, to consider buying their products then maybe, just maybe, we need to be circulating our volunteer recruitment messages more than once in a while.”

In conclusion, there is no blanket or magic solution to volunteer recruitment. But, like many people who have become 'experts' in volunteer recruitment, take my advice, learn by doing, and build on experience!

Since July 1994, Rob Jackson has managed volunteers and programmes in education, advice, fundraising and children’s services settings. Rob’s company, R Jackson Associates, provides volunteer management training for organisations such as the Directory of Social Change, the Metropolitan Police, Volunteer Bureaux and The Samaritans. Rob writes, speaks and trains on volunteer programme management internationally and is active in a variety of ways within the UK volunteering sector. He can be contacted at rob-jackson@lineone.net or on 0794 121 9226.

WHERE TO FIND THE RIGHT VOLUNTEERS

Attracting the right volunteers for your organisation is essential. A good tactic is to seek volunteers from an agency that is already working with your target groups. For example, we see below how Arts & Business can help find experienced professionals; and special support agencies or groups can help you recruit specific volunteers, for example unemployed people. Visiting people on their own patch – perhaps making a presentation about the recruitment drive – allows potential volunteers to listen, and take away the information to mull over, rather than putting them in a position they can’t get themselves out of, as often happens at interview. Working in this way enables support agencies to convey the information about the volunteering opportunity, and how it relates specifically to their beneficiaries. If

applicants then decided to apply, it generally means they're pretty serious about volunteering. And the support agency is effectively doing the first 'sift' in the recruitment process.

The following is a selection of useful sources to help you find the right volunteers.

www.ineedvolunteers.com

Fraser Dyer (co-author of *Recruiting Volunteers: Attracting The People You Need*) has launched a new website offering an e-course on volunteer recruitment. www.ineedvolunteers.com takes participants through a series of strategies to overcome some of the most common obstacles to effective recruitment faced by volunteer co-ordinators.

The course, which costs around £48, comprises eight weekly emails made up of a training bulletin, a list of practical action steps, and a highlighted 'trap' to avoid. "Delivering a course in this way," says Fraser, "gives people the flexibility to weave what they learn into their daily work without the disruption of going on a workshop for a day or two. By 'dripping' learning points into the workplace via email there is a greater potential for people to absorb and implement their learning along the way, than there is when they get big chunks of it on a training course."

The email training bulletins are complemented by a copy of Fraser Dyer and Ursula Jost's book on volunteer recruitment which is sent out to everyone who signs up for the course. They also receive a coaching session with Fraser by phone, and access to a telephone conference with other practitioners who are taking the course.

The course begins on 19th May, and bookings are made via the website, where part one of the course is also available for preview (free of charge) online.

Arts & Business

Formerly ABSA – the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, Arts & Business was created in 1976 with the aim of developing creative partnerships between business and the arts. Twenty-seven years on and this vision remains the driving force behind the organisation and its Professional Development Programmes. The three programmes: Board Bank, Skills Bank and Mentoring offer arts organisations free access to enthusiastic and skilled volunteers from within the corporate sector who volunteer their time either as board members, advisors or mentors. The programmes not only benefit the arts organisations which use them but also help individual arts managers by addressing their professional development needs. The arts community is very adept at turning its hand to any task and, often with limited resources, many arts managers find themselves undertaking responsibilities and roles outside their field of expertise. From managing accounts to addressing legal issues, resolving IT problems to arts marketing, the list can be endless. And without specialist knowledge, making the right decision for the right reasons can be difficult. The Arts & Business Skills Bank helps arts organisations and museums to bridge the knowledge gap with free advice from experienced business advisors. Placements are short term and project based with an emphasis on the transfer of skills, so the organisation is equipped to deal with similar issues in the future. Arts managers who have worked with advisors often find that they not only resolve the problem at hand, but also grow in confidence and gain a fresh outlook on their role. Quicksilver Theatre Company – a former user of the Skills Bank said of its experience: "It was wonderfully supportive to be able to work closely with someone who was informed but objective. The Arts & Business Skills Bank scheme is invaluable."

If you are interested in finding out more about the Skills Bank or any of the Arts & Business Professional Development Programmes please contact Jane Robinson at jane.robinson@AandB.org.uk.

Volunteer Development England

The UK-wide network of volunteer bureaux acts as a first stop shop for finding local volunteers, and for getting advice on volunteer management best practice. They will register your organisation's details and advertise positions for you. Find your local bureaux (there may be more than one) at www.vde.org.uk.

REACH

This excellent organisation specialises in matching retired professionals and executives with suitable volunteering opportunities. Register your organisation's details at www.volwork.org.uk and let them forward suitable candidates.

Student Volunteering UK

An organisation that supports, promotes and develops student volunteers. For more information on involving students, call 0800 0182146 or email info@studentvol.org.uk. The web site is under development at <http://www.studentvol.org.uk/>.

Do-it

A site that calls itself 'the home of volunteering on the web'. Register your organisation's details at www.do-it.org.uk/ and let them help you find volunteers online.

e-Volunteerism.com – the Electronic Journal of the Volunteer Community – has posted an article entitled 'Group Interviewing Techniques: Hitting the Bull's-Eye Every Time' by Jill Friedman Fixler. You have to subscribe to the site to read the whole thing, but you can see a preview by clicking on 'preview' at the home page <http://www.e-Volunteerism.com> and can download the article for a small fee.

National Centre for Volunteering

And don't forget www.volunteering.org.uk for a whole host of other volunteer involving organisations.

ANALYSIS: Lynn Blackadder on tips and techniques for interviewing volunteers

Once you've caught the interest of your target audience, it's important to create an informal, comfortable environment which will promote an open, two-way dialogue to explore the volunteer opportunity, and the potential volunteer's needs. These people are not applying for a job, but are offering to give you their time for free. But you also need to convey to them the importance of the opportunity not only to make a valuable contribution, but to develop themselves in return, and take something away from the experience. Depending on your offer, you might also need to make applicants aware of any 'competition' in terms of numbers of places. And if your programme is externally funded, it's usually a requirement (not to mention good practice) that the volunteers are made aware of who's paying for them to be there. Here are some simple, but effective tips for setting up and managing interviews:

- In the first instance, ask volunteers to 'register' their interest in volunteering, rather than formally applying. This helps keep the 'interview' informal. Call the interview an 'informal chat', if this helps.
- Structure the volunteer's expectations throughout the recruitment process: tell them what they can expect, who they will be meeting, and what the process is after the interview, ie when they will be hearing from you, etc.
- Offer the volunteer several options for when they would like to meet you. This may have to be out of working hours.
- Tell the volunteer in advance that you will be paying their travel expenses (if you can), and ask them to bring a receipt.

- Make sure that information about the organisation and the volunteering opportunity is sent out in advance. This will maximise your time talking about the role.
- A 1:1 interview is the best method of finding out if the volunteering opportunity will work for both parties. If you have to do group interviews, keep numbers small – unless the volunteering task is a big one-off, such as a marketing leaflet drop.
- Tell your volunteers that they can bring a friend with them if this will make them feel more comfortable.
- Honesty is the best policy! Discuss concerns that you have with the volunteer, allow them to do the same, and make sure that any issues are discussed openly.
- Explain what the volunteer will be asked to 'sign up' to, eg signing a volunteer agreement, turning up at specific times etc. Also explain that volunteering must be in line with the rules and regulations of the Volunteer Handbook – which should also be sent in advance (every volunteer-involving organisation should have one!).
- Offer a contact name for candidates to ring if they have any further questions, or want to withdraw from the process.
- Make sure you take up references.
- Ask for comments on the interview process – issue a simple, anonymous form for feedback.

FUTURE FEATURES

Do you have a volunteer programme that you would like to tell **cv** readers about? We would like to help readers learn from others' experiences. In the August issue, we will be hearing about the volunteers who support Cheshire Rural Touring Network. In the meantime, **cv** has commissioned Fiona Thompson, freelance arts writer www.wordspring.co.uk, to interview over the coming months any organisations willing to share their volunteering experiences. The case studies might be used in a new publication we're exploring about cultural volunteering. If you would like to take part, please email lynn@lynnblackadder.com.

FEEDBACK

cv is keen to respond to your interests and needs. If you would like to forward your news and views, comment on content, or suggest a topic for discussion, please email lynn@lynnblackadder.com.

NEXT ISSUE

In June, **cv** will be getting philosophical, and **reviewing current thinking on volunteering and civic renewal**. We'll also be looking at the **pros and cons of having volunteer agreements**.

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Circulation 405